ABOUT ECLAC/CDCC

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is one of five regional commissions of the United Nations Economics and Social Council (ECOSOC). It was established in 1948 to support Latin American governments in the economic and social development of that region. Subsequently, in 1966, the Commission (ECLA, at that time) established the subregional headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain to serve all countries of the insular Caribbean, as well as Belize, Guyana and Suriname, making it the largest United Nations body in the subregion.

At its sixteenth session in 1975, the Commission agreed to create the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) as a permanent subsidiary body, which would function within the ECLA structure to promote development cooperation among Caribbean countries. Secretariat services to the CDCC would be provided by the subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. Nine years later, the Commission’s widened role was officially acknowledged when the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) modified its title to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Key Areas of Activity

The ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean (ECLAC/CDCC secretariat) functions as a subregional think-tank and facilitates increased contact and cooperation among its membership. Complementing the ECLAC/CDCC work programme framework, are the broader directives issued by the United Nations General Assembly when in session, which constitute the Organization’s mandate. At present, the overarching articulation of this mandate is the Millennium Declaration, which outlines the Millennium Development Goals.

Towards meeting these objectives, the Secretariat conducts research; provides technical advice to governments, upon request; organizes intergovernmental and expert group meetings; helps to formulate and articulate a regional perspective within global forums; and introduces global concerns at the regional and subregional levels.

Areas of specialisation include trade, statistics, social development, science and technology, and sustainable development; while actual operational activities extend to economic and development planning, demography, economic surveys, assessment of the socio-economic impacts of natural disasters, climate change, data collection and analysis, training, and assistance with the management of national economies.

The ECLAC subregional headquarters of the Caribbean also functions as the Secretariat for coordinating the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The scope of ECLAC/CDCC activities is documented in the wide range of publications produced by the subregional headquarters in Port of Spain.

MEMBER COUNTRIES:
Antigua and Barbuda
The Bahamas
Barbados
Belize
Cuba
Dominica
Dominican Republic
Grenada
Guyana
Haiti
Jamaica
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Suriname
Trinidad and Tobago

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:
Anguilla
Aruba
Bermuda
British Virgin Islands
Cayman Islands
Curacao
Guadeloupe
Martinique
Montserrat
Puerto Rico
Sint Maarten
Turks and Caicos Islands
United States Virgin Islands

FOCUS: ECLAC in the Caribbean: a publication of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters for the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC).

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The year 2015 marks an important milestone in the international community’s efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women: the 20 year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA). Adopted unanimously in 1995 by 189 governments at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, the BPfA is a blueprint for gender equality and women’s empowerment. During the past 20 years, the BPfA has galvanized unprecedented global social and political mobilization to end discrimination and inequality against women.

The adoption of the BPfA stemmed from the recognition of the persistence of inequalities between women and men, and of their consequences for the well-being of all people. The Platform provides the vision of a world where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and realize her rights, including the right to live a life free from violence, to go to school, to participate in decisions and to earn equal pay for equal work.

Five years after the historic adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the international community re-assembled during the Special Session of the General Assembly to assess progress made in the implementation of the commitments made in Beijing. Governments reaffirmed their commitment to: (i) promoting and protecting the equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men; and (ii) addressing the constraints and obstacles and to enhance the advancement and empowerment of women all over the world. They agreed that this required urgent action.

These commitments which have reaffirmed and expanded in the Political Declaration and outcome document of the Twenty-third Special Session, constitute the basis for global action to promote gender equality, empowerment and development. Although the Beijing process unleashed remarkable political will and worldwide visibility for the empowerment of women and gender equality, there are still many challenges and obstacles to overcome in order to fully realize the goals of the Beijing agenda. In this context, the United Nations has undertaken a global review and appraisal of the implementation of the BPfA to measure progress and identify challenges encountered.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is mandated by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in Resolution E/RES/2013/18, to provide support in the follow up process to the Fourth World Conference on Women, and to the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly. In this context, the ECLAC Caribbean...
Beijing +20 Reinforces the Need to Address Gender-Based Violence in the Post-2015 Agenda

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) promotes the fundamental principle that the rights of women and girls are an “inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all universal human rights”\(^1\), and calls on governments to take action to address several critical areas including violence against women. However, although most Caribbean countries have enacted domestic violence and sexual offences legislation, there continues to be a high rate of gender based violence (GBV) in the region.

The Caribbean Context\(^2\)

The Caribbean suffers from a lack of available data on GBV and ineffective coordination among services that deal with victims. Based on United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC’s) Crime Trends Survey, where comparable data is actually available, it is reported that Caribbean countries have a higher than global average for rape, in addition to which one in three women in the region will experience some form of domestic violence.\(^3\) According to UN Women, country studies for Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, British Virgin Islands and Suriname indicate that between 20-69 per cent of women in intimate relationships have been victims of domestic violence.\(^4\)

Strategies have been introduced across the Caribbean, to end GBV, with varying degrees of success. Most countries have increased state capacity and accountability through law reform and police training, and have introduced more severe sanctions for sex offenders, in some cases. The Turks and Caicos Gender Affairs Unit in collaboration with the Turks and Caicos Islands Police, the Human Rights Commission and the courts, have been engaged in dialogue and action to ensure protection and justice for victims of domestic violence. In Antigua and Barbuda, the Government has participated in the “Strengthening State Accountability and Community Based Action to End Gender Based Violence” programme, which increased the capacities of police, community actors, nurses and the judiciary in their efforts to end sexual and gender based violence. Similarly, in Suriname, social workers, teachers, religious leaders, medical doctors and other health workers have been trained in early detection of violence in their daily practice, as well as in the provision of adequate support and guidance to victims and those at risk.

Most countries in the region have established shelters and hotline services, and increased the promotion of men as advocates against violence. There have also been programmes targeting the

\(^1\) [http://beijing20.unwomen.org/~/media/Field%20Office%20Beijing%20Plus/Attachments/BeijingDeclarationAndPlatformForAction-en.pdf]

\(^2\) Information is based on the submission of National Reviews for Beijing +20 from the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda; Dominica; Grenada; Suriname and Turks and Caicos.


\(^4\) [http://www.unifemcar.org/ge_iss.cfm?SubID=169&link_=12_810](http://www.unifemcar.org/ge_iss.cfm?SubID=169&link_=12_810)
perpetrators of violence - for example in Suriname, where a working group in the Ministry of Justice and Police has been tasked with establishing a unit that will be responsible for the counselling of perpetrators of domestic violence.

With a view to improving data on GBV, ECLAC has developed a domestic violence protocol for a reliable data collection system. So far, it has been implemented in Belize. The protocol helps to obtain a profile of victims and perpetrators; develop an understanding of the frequency and incidence of domestic violence; identify groups at risk; develop intervention programmes; and monitor the effectiveness of violence prevention and intervention activities.

National Registries for Domestic Violence have been established in countries like Dominica with the support of UN Women, following the call for improved data on domestic violence. The Bureau of Gender Affairs maintains the Registry and receives reports from many partners, including the Dominica Police Force, the Gender Bureau, the Dominica National Council of Women, the Dominica Legal Aid and the Welfare Department.

Notwithstanding the increased awareness of domestic violence in the Caribbean, under-reporting remains a challenge, since victims are reluctant to report these incidences given their lack of confidence in the security (police) and justice (courts) sectors, their fear of reprisal from the perpetrator, and because of the shame and stigma associated with such violence.

**THE WAY FORWARD**

The 2015 session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will culminate a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. ECLAC will lead the preparation of a regional assessment based on national reviews submitted by the Caribbean countries. These assessments will not only give voice to the principal concerns of the Caribbean region, but also offer renewed opportunities to further mobilise and strengthen political commitment targeted at gender equality and women’s empowerment, as the Post 2015 Agenda takes precedence. More work still needs to be done - especially in the area of administrative data and reporting of incidences of GBV and coordination of services that deal with GBV victims.
The Observatory is an analytical tool designed to support governments (and civil society groups) in their efforts to assess progress towards gender equality at the national level. Through its online portal, the platform provides instant access to a large repository of information, which – although not sufficient to cover the entire agenda of the BPfa – highlights common areas of concern contained in a number of international agreements that intersect with the Beijing Platform for Action, including the Cairo Programme of Action and the MDGs.

INDICATORS OF MEASUREMENT

The overarching goal of the Observatory is the promotion of women’s autonomy. Within this context, the Observatory focuses upon many issues, including paid and unpaid work; time use and poverty; access to decision-making and political representation; and gender-based violence. Reproductive health and rights are captured as cross-cutting issues.

The indicators of the Observatory are organized with a view to facilitating the study of the obstacles faced by women in their quest for economic, physical and decision-making autonomy. In this context, three main pillars have been identified for constructing greater gender equality in the region, namely: economic autonomy, i.e., the generation of women’s own income and resources; physical autonomy, i.e., the control of women over their own bodies; and decision-making autonomy, i.e., the full participation of women in the decisions that affect their lives individually and collectively.

CARIBBEAN PARTICIPATION

ECLAC has sponsored a technical meeting to facilitate Caribbean participation in the Observatory, and to define and agree on a basic set of indicators of concern to the Caribbean; to revise and analyse the relevance of the proposed indicators; and to identify potential data sources.

Implementation of activities in the Caribbean has encountered a number of challenges, including the lack of timely data to generate and update the indicators of the Observatory. Data that have proven particularly challenging to collect include sex disaggregated data and data on unpaid work from time use surveys. A further challenge facing the Caribbean is the fact that statistical estimates, especially by gender, are difficult to calculate in small populations and tend to produce relatively skewed results.

Studies have been conducted in Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago to provide insights into the availability of core social and gender indicators at national level, and to identify the type of technical support and training required at the national level to generate the indicators required by the Observatory.

The results of these studies were used to assist in the design, planning and implementation of two national capacity building workshops in Antigua and Barbuda and Guyana, and to assist governments in the production of reliable disaggregated data. Similar workshops were also conducted in the Turks and Caicos Islands and Jamaica. In the case of Jamaica, the Bureau of Gender Affairs was instrumental in establishing a national gender equality observatory. The main added value of the Observatory lies in its ability to effectively address the issue of data collection inadequacies, which continue to hinder efforts to measure progress on development goals and social issues, such as the incidence and prevalence of domestic violence in the Caribbean.
Gender Indicators – Key Elements of any Development Framework

Statistical indicators provide a necessary foundation for sound decision-making and good governance. Statistical indicators are derived measures that facilitate a more complete understanding of a situation/phenomenon, and that measure how circumstances under study change over time. Furthermore, unlike statistics that are aggregates of facts, indicators are deemed better parameters for understanding how phenomena evolve spatially and temporally. For that reason, national statistical offices and other data producing agencies develop a wide range of indicators across different sectors, for use by governments in tracking issues and related policy interventions. Of the many indicators produced nationally, gender indicators are particularly valuable since they contribute to the development of effective policies that promote human rights, and ensure the advancement of women’s rights and gender equality.

Importance of Gender Indicators

Gender indicators provide empirical information on the situation of women and men, thus promoting greater understanding of changes in gender equality issues in a society over time. When included as part of the broader systematic collection and production of gender statistics, gender-sensitive indicators help not only with highlighting differences in the welfare of women and men in society, but more importantly, they form the basis for addressing gender issues. Therefore, the development of gender indicators facilitates the identification of gaps and provides the evidence needed to lobby for the formulation of policies to reduce gender inequality.

The development of gender indicators is typically linked to national strategy or national legislation on gender equality. The indicators ensure that national authorities remain accountable for their commitments on gender. Furthermore, indicators act as barometers of the progress of policy interventions that promote gender equality and can be used to improve future planning. It should be noted that the need for gender indicators is often anchored in international commitments and frameworks to which governments are party. This therefore facilitates the measurement of progress towards achieving those obligations.

International Efforts Promoting Development of Gender Indicators

Adopted in 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) promotes the advancement of women’s rights, and serves as the global policy framework for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Strategic objective H.3 of the BPfA calls on governments, United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders to take actions to generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation. By doing so, the BPfA underscores the need to develop and apply specific methodological and theoretical approaches in the compilation of gender statistics.

By heightening awareness of the importance of gender equality, the BPfA provided impetus not only for ensuring the production of statistics that are disaggregated by sex, but more importantly, by leading to the development and application of specific methodological and theoretical approaches in the compilation of data and production of gender statistics. Adopted in 2000, the Millennium Declaration further underscored
the need for countries to develop reliable and comparable gender indicators, and called for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (goal 3).

**SITUATION IN THE CARIBBEAN**

In order to advance international gender equality goals, many Caribbean governments have invested resources in the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies. In several cases, gender policies and programmes have been formulated and implemented to promote the advancement of women’s rights.

Notwithstanding these efforts, many countries still do not produce the requisite indicators to monitor the progress achieved through the implementation of these policies and programmes. In many countries, even basic sex disaggregated data remain scarce. This unavailability and incomplete coverage of gender statistics and indicators is due to a number of factors, ranging from capacity challenges to technical and conceptual issues.

**NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN GENDER INDICATORS**

Despite limited progress in the production of reliable and timely gender indicators and statistics, regional and international institutions continue to promote the need for countries to include the compilation of concrete and measurable gender indicators as a core part of their statistical activities. In 2013, the Interagency Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS) developed a minimum set of gender indicators. By expanding the list of the 12 priority areas laid out in the BPfA, the set comprised 52 quantitative indicators covering areas such as economic structures; participation in productive activities and access to resources; education; health and related services; public life and decision-making; and human rights of women and children.

At its 44th session, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSD) adopted the set of gender indicators, which is expected to serve as a framework for production and compilation of gender statistics at the national level. The commitment to address issues of gender equality and women’s rights continues to feature in global processes such as the drafting of post-2015 sustainable development goals (SDGs). This has translated into the inclusion of a standalone goal (goal 5 - achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls), and the insertion of targets across the 18 goals to address gender equality and women’s rights.

**ECLAC’S SUPPORT**

Within the Latin American and Caribbean region, ECLAC develops and strengthens the institutional capacities of national statistical offices and gender bureaus, and encourages efforts aimed at systematizing national statistical information with a gender perspective. The Statistical Commission of the Americas (SCA) established a Working Group on Gender Statistics in 2007. The programme of work of the working group focuses on the development of statistical and methodological capacities to produce high-quality statistics, among other objectives.

Furthermore, to enable governments to engage in evidence-based policy making, ECLAC has implemented a Gender Equality Observatory that serves as a regional repository for data on key gender inequality indicators. Prior to the development of the observatory, the Women’s Division of ECLAC embarked on the project “Use of gender indicators in public policy making” that sought to develop gender indicators for the Caribbean. Through the project, ECLAC was able to create a database of gender indicators for 14 English-speaking countries using micro data from the 1990 and 2000 rounds of the population and housing censuses.

In 2013, ECLAC provided training to 18 representatives of gender bureaus and national statistical offices from 9 countries, on methodological issues related to the collection of data and compilation of gender indicators. The workshop is expected to contribute to the full mainstreaming of gender into the production, analysis and dissemination of national statistics and indicators.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action highlighted that women were disproportionately affected by poverty and were overrepresented among those living in poverty. The Platform for Action called for a gender perspective to be integrated into economic, labour market and social policies to ensure more equitable outcomes. It also called for action to improve women’s opportunities for employment and self employment, as well as the extension of social security systems and equality within the home in order to lift the burden of poverty on women.

In the Caribbean, many women continue to live in poverty. While poverty rates are decreasing in some countries, in others they are on the rise (Figure 1). However, female poverty rates have fallen slightly more than the corresponding rates for men. While in the 1990s, poverty rates for women were higher than those for men in most countries, this is no longer the case and female poverty rates now tend to be lower than the rates for men. Increased labour market participation and greater educational achievements of women have contributed to these improvements.

Poverty among female headed households

In most Caribbean countries, female headed households (FHHs) account for between 30 and 50 per cent of households, and the proportion is increasing. Poverty rates tend to be higher among FHHs than among male headed households, with one of the major reasons for this being the greater likelihood of FHHs containing children. As with poverty rates among women, poverty rates among FHHs have declined in some countries but increased in others. Moreover, while there have been important gains in terms of the economic status of women in general, not all FHHs have benefited equally – as reflected in the persistence of poverty among this group.

There are three distinct types of FHH: single female households; those with a spouse and/or children; and composite households. Households comprising single females with children are at particular risk of poverty because of the difficulties in combining work with childcare responsibilities. Single older women can also be at greater risk of poverty due to lifetime earnings and pension inequalities. However, since they do not take into account intra-household allocation of resources, poverty measurements based on household incomes or expenditure offer only a partial view of gender inequalities. In addition, the notion of household headship is problematic with males often designated as heads of household even if they are not the primary earner. FHHs are often thought of as being the households without an adult male although this is not always the case. This challenge highlights the inadequacy of FHHs as a category for analysis, and the need for a more detailed classification of household types.

Conclusions

While there has been identifiable progress since 1995, poverty remains pervasive across the region. There have been reductions in the most extreme poverty, referred to as indigence, principally due to economic growth. However, poverty measured against national poverty lines remains persistently high. The main reason for the failure to substantially reduce poverty across the subregion as a whole is the continuing high level of inequality. National poverty lines reflect what is deemed to be a minimum acceptable standard of living in a given country. As economies grow, this norm is adjusted to reflect new realities. However, this means that to reduce poverty, it is not merely sufficient for the incomes of poor households to increase, but they have to increase at a rate faster than the incomes of non-poor households. Therefore, it is necessary for public policy to address poverty both through the achievement of sustained economic growth, as well as through measures to reduce inequality.
### Poverty Rates by Sex and the Poverty Femininity Index

**Figure 1**

<table>
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<th>Country</th>
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<td>Poverty Rate (Females)</td>
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<td>Poverty Rate (Male HoH)</td>
<td>Poverty Rate (Female HoH)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Caribbean Development Bank Country Poverty Assessments and National Surveys of Living Conditions.

\(^1\) The Poverty Femininity Index: poverty rate among women / poverty rate among men x 100.

\(^2\) The Barbados survey in 1997 used a different methodology to the other poverty assessments so the estimates are not strictly comparable to those from other surveys.

\(^3\) The poverty rates and femininity index for households in the British Virgin Islands are based on data which distinguish between households with adult males and households with no adults males.

\(^4\) The Poverty Femininity Index for Montserrat is calculated based on data for adults aged over 15.
Subregional Headquarters will host a subregional technical meeting to review progress and propose recommendations in compliance with the commitments made in Beijing and those being proposed within the context of the post-2015 development agenda. The outcome of the meeting will be a Caribbean Synthesis review and appraisal report.

The 20th anniversary of Beijing has engendered a wave of activity in commemoration of the historic fourth World Conference on Women. In June 2014, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) launched a year long, global campaign in New York to mark the anniversary and to spark dialogue and actions on women’s rights and gender equality.

In March 2015, a global review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action will be undertaken by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, where governments and civil society will come together to debate and set the agenda for sustainable development after 2015. This will be a signal opportunity for the women of the Caribbean to let their voices be heard; to seek the solidarity and support of the global community in advancing issues and initiatives central to the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the subregion.

Yours in Focus,
Diane

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**Upcoming Events**

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<tr>
<td>4 August 2014</td>
<td>Launch of the Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean. Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.</td>
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<td>3 September</td>
<td>Panel discussion on: “The vulnerability of Caribbean small island developing States revisited: it’s all about size”. Apia, Samoa.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 September – 10 October</td>
<td>Regional training workshop on the development of REDATAM applications for the dissemination of the 2011 population and housing census. Saint George’s, Grenada.</td>
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**List of Recent ECLAC Documents and Publications**

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<td>May 2014</td>
<td>Strategies to overcome barriers to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy in the Caribbean</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.440</td>
<td>May 2014</td>
<td>Report of the twenty-fifth session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee</td>
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<td>W.6</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>A new frontier for Caribbean convergence: integration without borders</td>
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<td>L.439</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>The case of small island developing states of the Caribbean: The challenge of building resilience</td>
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<td>Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017</td>
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<td>Report of the meeting on linking the post disaster needs assessment to the damage and loss assessment methodology</td>
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<td>Report of the meeting on an evaluation of ECLAC post-disaster assessments in the Caribbean</td>
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<td>L.434</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>Report of national training workshop on the development of REDATAM applications for the dissemination of the 2011 census data</td>
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